

Message Text

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PAGE 01 FLOREN 00340 181401Z

43

ACTION EUR-12

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TO SECSTATE WASHDC 1183

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SUBJECT: SUDDEN CLOSURE FLORENCE OFFICE AMERICAN EXPRESS

REF: FLORENCE 0338

1. FOLLOWING A MEETING SEPTEMBER 17 AMONG REPRESENTATIVES
DISMISSED AMERICAN EXPRESS EMPLOYEES, CITY ALDERMEN
RESPONSIBLE FOR TOURISM AND ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT, LABOR
UNION REPRESENTATIVES AND CITY TOURISM OFFICE, FLORENCE
MAYOR SENT TELEGRAMS OF PROTEST OVER CLOSING AMERICAN
EXPRESS OFFICE TO MINISTERS OF TOURISM AND LABOR.
TELEGRAM REQUESTED THEIR INTERVENTION WITH AMERICAN
EXPRESS COMPAY TO PREVENT CLOSURE FLORENCE OFFICE.

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PAGE 02 FLOREN 00340 181401Z

2. LOCAL PRESS HAS RECOMMENCED PUBLICIZE AND DRAMATIZE

CLOSURE. PRINCIPAL NEWSPAPER 'LA NAZIONE' HAS GIVEN GENERALLY CALM AND ACCURATE ACCOUNT SITUATION. NEW FLORENCE NEWSPAPER 'IL NUOVO' HAS GIVEN EXCITED AND INACCURATE ACCOUNT SITUATION AND HAS EXHIBITED ANTI-AMERICAN BIAS IN ITS REPORTING. FOR EXAMPLE, ONLY 'IL NUOVO' HAS REPORTED EXISTENCE RECENTLY POSTED PLACARD STATING QUOTE THANK YOU MR. KISSINGER FOR OUR UNEMPLOYMENT UNQUOTE AND HAS STATED THAT QUOTE IT IS KNOWN FACT THAT MANY MEMBERS OF THE CIA AND OFFICERS OF THE PENTAGON CARRY AMERICAN EXPRESS CREDIT CARDS UNQUOTE. BOTH NEWSPAPERS REPORT CLOSING NAPLES OFFICE ON SEPTEMBER 29 AND SIT-INS AT ROME AND VENICE OFFICES AS MARK THEIR SYMPATHY WITH NAPLES AND FLORENCE COLLEAGUES.

3. MAYOR OF FLORENCE HAS CALLED MEETING AT CITY HALL FOR AFTERNOON OF SEPTEMBER 19 TO DISCUSS MATTER. REPRESENTATIVES OF EMPLOYEES, LABOR UNION OFFICIALS, CITY TOURIST OFFICE REPRESENTATIVES, CITY ALDERMEN AND PARLIAMENTARY DEPUTIES EXPECTED AT MEETING. CONSUL GENERAL RECEIVED PERSONAL TELEGRAM FROM MAYOR NOTIFYING HIM OF MEETING. AS OF THIS WRITING, IT UNCERTAIN WHO, IF ANYONE, WILL REPRESENT AMERICAN EXPRESS AT THIS MEETING.

4. HAD LENGTHY DISCUSSION SITUATION WITH MR. ALBERTO MODULO (REFTEL) AT CONSULATE MORNING SEPTEMBER 18. FOLLOWING OUR DISCUSSION HE IS MEETING WITH PRESIDENT CITY TOURIST OFFICE AND CITY ALDERMEN IN CHARGE OF TOURISM. IN OUR DISCUSSION MODULO OUTLINED DIFFICULTIES FACING AMERICAN EXPRESS IN FLORENCE BECAUSE OF CONTINUED HEAVY FINANCIAL LOSSES AND POOR LOCAL MANAGEMENT. OF 18 EMPLOYEES DISMISSED, TWO ARE ELIGIBLE FOR RETIREMENT AND IT PROBABLE THAT AT LEAST FIVE WILL BE EMPLOYED BY FIRM IN FLORENCE WHICH WILL TAKE OVER AS AMERICAN EXPRESS REPRESENTATIVE. AMERICAN EXPRESS EXPECTS OPEN NEW OFFICE IN BOLOGNA AND IT IS POSSIBLE ONE OR TWO EMPLOYEES IN FLORENCE MAY BE TRANSFERRED TO BOLOGNA IF THEY WISH. THIS LEAVES ONLY 9 WHO MAY BE DIFFICULT TO PLACE ELSEWHERE AND, ACCORDING MODULO, FOUR ARE WORKING WIVES WHOSE UNCLASSIFIED

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PAGE 03 FLOREN 00340 181401Z

SALARY BASICALLY SUPPLEMENTING OTHER FAMILY INCOME.

5. MODULO BID SENIOR VICE PRESIDENT OF AMERICAN EXPRESS COMPANY ARRIVING ROME SEPTEMBER 18 TO ASSIST WITH PUBLIC RELATIONS AND OTHER MATTERS CONCERNING SITUATION.

6. ORIGINAL FLURRY OF CONCERN REGARDING STABILITY AMERICAN EXPRESS BANK HAS NOW DIED DOWN. REPORTEDLY FIRST DAY OR TWO SOME FLORENCE BUSINESS ESTABLISHMENTS RELYING ON FALSE RUMORS REFUSED TO ACCEPT AMERICAN EXPRESS CREDIT CARDS, ASSOCIATING THEIR VALIDITY WITH STABILITY OF BANK.
GORDON

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